



Mapping Maggie Walker's Neighborhood: Jackson Ward Historic District

Target audience: 11th grade VA/ US History

Ties to Virginia Standards of Learning: History and Social Science SOLs: VUS6.e, VUS7.d,e, VUS.8c,d, VUS.10 a,b,c, VUS.11c, VUS.12a,b, VUS.14a,b

Materials: Access to internet, iPods, digital cameras, photo printer, laminator, book rings, word processing software and computers

Abstract: In this lesson, students will create a visual map and podcast to be used as a walking tour of the historic Jackson Ward Neighborhood where Maggie L. Walker lived. Students should use digital cameras to photograph the buildings described in the passage above. Using Google Earth, or a similar GIS website, students will plot each building on the map and develop a set of written directions for a walking tour of the neighborhood. Students will create a laminated set of visual images of each site, with information about each building, to be hung on book rings and carried by tour participants as they listen and follow along with the podcast. Teachers should consult their divisions' ITRTs for assistance in podcasting and creating maps using GIS software.

Jackson Ward Historic District is a fine 19th-century residential district. The entire Jackson Ward Historic District is only one of two districts that are National Historic Landmarks in the City of Richmond. This formal recognition of its national significance stems from the importance of Jackson Ward in African American history. African Americans settled in Jackson Ward in the early 19th century and by the early 20th century had become the majority of the neighborhood's residents. Jackson Ward became the largest African American community in Richmond and a nationally important center of African American economic and cultural activity. Jackson Ward was one of the most important black business communities at its height and the location of banks, clubs, insurance companies, and commercial and social institutions. The neighborhood was home to such distinguished African Americans as the founder of the

Saint Luke Penny Savings Bank, Maggie Lena Walker, and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, the famous actor and dancer.

In 1769 William Byrd III, owner of much of what is now Richmond, subdivided the area encompassing present-day Jackson Ward into 100-acre “out lots” to award as prizes in a lottery of his real estate holdings. The property that sold at lottery stood outside of the corporate and developed areas of Richmond proper. Richmond grew toward this area in the early 19th century, and this growth encouraged the families who owned much of the property (the Jacksons, Foushees, Duvals, and Coutts) to subdivide and sell their land. A diverse group of “Free Persons of Color,” European immigrants, American-born white artisans, and Richmond businessmen bought lots and built homes in these outlying subdivisions. The two oldest buildings in Jackson Ward are good examples of this early residential development. The Tucker cottage at 701 Chamberlayne Parkway (which stood originally on the 300 block of 3rd Street) dates from 1802, with the front of the building dating from 1845. This gambrel-roofed cottage is the last of its kind in Richmond. Constructed in 1813, 133 West Jackson Street is an excellent example of a two-room-over-two-room center-hall house.

The sparsely built suburban character of the neighborhood began to change in the mid-19th century as row houses and town houses filled the area. The architecture of this period is on display along Marshall Street (one-way going east from Belvidere Street) and Clay Street (one-way going west from 2nd Street). Brick buildings interspersed with a number of frame buildings characterize Jackson Ward architecture of the mid-19th century. A number of Greek Revival town houses and row houses date to the 1840s and 1850s. These buildings have porches with round or square columns (typically one bay in width), English basements, gable roofs, and stepped parapets.

After the Civil War the Italianate and Second Empire styles came into and remained in vogue until the end of the 19th century. Both styles feature heavily bracketed cornices. The styles can be differentiated because Italianate houses have sloped roofs or slightly pitched gable roofs and the Second Empire style is characterized by “false” (front façade only) mansard roofs with or without dormers. The porches of Italianate and Second Empire style houses are of particular interest. Throughout the district are many wooden porches with various combinations of turned posts, turned or sawn balusters, and sawn brackets.

Jackson Ward has a large collection of historic cast iron porches that constitute some of Richmond’s great architectural treasures. Richmond cast iron porches feature decorative railings, slender columns, and bands ornamented with trellis, floral, and vine patterns. These highly ornamented elements create porches with the quality of a garden pavilion. They are for the most part the products of Richmond foundries that provided the same patterns to a number of different builders and property owners. Clay Street and the 100 block of East Leigh Street have the largest concentration of cast iron porches in Richmond.

African Americans worked over time to design and construct many of the buildings in Jackson Ward. The Adams family of builders constructed the house at 304 West Leigh Street in the 1850s. They also donated the land and built Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1858 at 214 West Leigh Street. About half a dozen African American builders worked in Jackson Ward at any give time during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of these, George Boyd, built the Maggie Walker House in 1888, now a National Park Service administered National Historic Site, as well as the original portion of the 1884 Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. In the 20th century, black architects John Lankford of Washington, D.C. and Richmonders Charles Russell and Harvey Johnson began to design buildings in the neighborhood. The only surviving building by Lankford is the Taylor Mansion of 1909 at 526 North 2nd Street, reputed to be the largest home commissioned by an African American in the United States up to that time. A number of buildings by Russell survive, including the Richmond Beneficial Insurance Company Building of 1912 at 700 North 2nd Street, the Hughes House of 1915 at 510 St. James Street, and the Masonic Lodge of 1911 at 10 East Leigh Street. Johnson, a protégé of Russell, designed the house at 102 West Jackson Street in 1919.

African American churches were central to the life of Jackson Ward. The oldest church in the district is the twin-towered Italianate style Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church dating from 1857 at 614 North 3rd Street. The second oldest building is Ebenezer Baptist Church, constructed in 1858 at 214 West Leigh Street. Population growth and the separation of African Americans from white congregations caused a dramatic increase in the number of black congregations in Jackson Ward after the Civil War. These congregations built or acquired a number of churches in the neighborhood for their use. Three congregations still occupy their buildings from the late 19th century: Sharon Baptist Church of 1884 at 18 East Leigh Street, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church constructed in 1884 and expanded in 1925 at 14 West Duval Street, and Hood Temple AME Zion Church at 20 West Clay Street. Sixth Mount Zion, which is renowned as the church of the Reverend John Jasper, has a museum, the Jasper Room, dating from 1925.

A number of important public buildings in the district have associations with the African American community. The Second Empire-style Booker T. Washington School at 21 East Leigh Street, dating from 1871, is the oldest public school building in Richmond and became an African American high school in the 1890s. Steamer Company Number Five is an outstanding Italianate-style fire and police station constructed in 1884 to the designs of Richmond City Engineer Wilfred Emory Cutshaw. It is situated on an unusual triangular site at 200 West Marshall Street, the intersection of Brook Road and Marshall Street. The First Battalion Virginia Volunteers Armory at 122 West Leigh Street dates from 1895 and is the oldest armory building in Virginia and possibly the only armory in the country built for African American troops. This castellated Gothic building by Cutshaw is a major landmark on Leigh Street. Charles Robinson designed the second home of Armstrong High School at 119 West Leigh Street in 1922, Richmond's only high school built for African Americans prior to 1938. Buildings associated with African

American culture in the neighborhood include the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia at 00 Clay Street, an early mansion converted to the first library for African Americans in Richmond the 1920s. The modern style Hippodrome Theatre of 1945 at 528 North 2nd Street is the last surviving of a number of theaters on 2nd Street. The building recalls the time when Jackson Ward, particularly 2nd Street, was a nationally known black entertainment district.

Jackson Ward was also a nationally known center of African American banking and insurance. The first African American bank chartered in the United States, the True Reformer's Bank, opened in 1886 in the W. W. Browne House at 105½ West Jackson Street. The Second Street Bank at 702 North 2nd Street and the Mechanics Savings Bank at 3rd and East Clay Streets are surviving examples of purpose-built headquarters for African American banks in the neighborhood. Fraternal insurance companies thrived in Jackson Ward, the most noteworthy surviving example of which is the St. Luke Building, just across interstate 95 from the Jackson Ward Historic District. The building housed the banking, printing, insurance, and meeting needs of the Order of St. Luke which was headquartered in Richmond. A number of other African American operated commercial enterprises thrived throughout Jackson Ward, and surviving examples can be seen on 1st and 2nd streets, as well as many street corners. One of the largest commercial operations during the period was the A. D. Price Funeral home from 1902 that still survives at 208 East Leigh Street. The Miller/Eggleston Hotel dating from about 1900 is at 541 North 2nd Street and is the last remaining hotel for African Americans in the neighborhood.

Jackson Ward is highly significant as the center of Richmond's African American community. The neighborhood is of great historical and architectural interest and is the last surviving residential area in downtown Richmond.

Resources:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nR/travel/richmond/JacksonWardHD.html>
<http://earth.google.com>
http://earth.google.com/intl/en/userguide/v5/ug_touringplaces.html